

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A rigid carton of packets of cigarettes, the carton comprising

a first container (3) for a group (4) of said packets (2) of cigarettes comprising an open top end (12), a bottom wall (13) opposite the open top end (12), two opposite parallel lateral walls (14), and two opposite parallel, respectively front and rear end walls (15, 16); and [,]

a second container (5) housing the first container (3) in sliding manner, so as to enable the first container (3) to slide, with respect to the second container (5), between a closed position wherein the first container (3) is fully inserted inside the second container (5), and an open position wherein part of the first container (3) is extracted from the second container (5);

~~the first container (3) being cup-shaped, and comprising an open top end (12), a bottom wall (13) opposite the open top end (12), two opposite parallel lateral walls (14), and two opposite parallel, respectively front and rear, end walls (15, 16); the carton (1) being characterized in that~~

wherein the bottom wall (13) of the first container (3) comprises at least one first through hole sized to permit insertion of a user's finger.

2. (currently amended) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein the bottom wall (13) of the first container (3) comprises, for each packet (2) of cigarettes, a respective first through hole sized to permit insertion of a user's finger and located at a bottom wall of the respective packet (2) of cigarettes.

3. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second container (5) is substantially in the form of a tubular parallelepiped defined by a lateral surface (6), which comprises two opposite parallel lateral walls (7), a top wall (8), and a bottom wall (9) parallel to and opposite the top wall (8).

4. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 3, wherein the second container (5) is in the form of a tubular parallelepiped having one end closed by an end wall (10), and an open end (11); when the first container (3) is in the closed position, each lateral wall (14) of the first container (3) being parallel to and facing a respective lateral wall (7) of the second container (5), the bottom wall (13) of the first container (3) being parallel to and facing the bottom wall (9) of the second container (5), the open top end (12) of the first container (3) facing the top wall (8) of the second container (5), the rear end wall (16) of the first container (3) being parallel to and facing the end wall (10) of the second container (5), and the front end wall (15) of the first container (3) facing the open end (11) of the second container (5).

5. (currently amended) A carton as claimed in claim 4, wherein the end wall (10) of the second container (5) has at least one second through hole (17) sized to permit insertion of a user's finger.

6. (cancelled)

7. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 4, wherein each lateral wall (7) of the second container (5) has a recess (18) close to the open end (11).

8. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 7, wherein each recess (18) is substantially semicircular.

9. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 4, and further comprising stop means (19, 20) for limiting slide of the first container (3) with respect to the second container (5) and so preventing detachment of the first container (3) from the second container (5).

10. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 9, wherein the stop means (19, 20) comprise at least one first tongue (19), which projects outwards of the first container

(3) from a respective lateral wall (14) of the first container (3), and is located close to the rear end wall (16) of the first container (3); and a second tongue (20), which projects inwards of the second container (5) from a respective lateral wall (7) of the second container (5), and is located close to the open end (11) of the second container (5); the first and second tongue (19, 20) being so positioned that the first tongue (19) engages the second tongue (20) as the first container (3) is slid out of the second container (5).

11. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 4, wherein the end walls (15, 16) of the first container (3) are substantially the same size as a packet (2) of cigarettes; the lateral walls (14) of the first container (3) varying in height, so as to be the same height as the end walls (15, 16) and the packets (2) of cigarettes close to the end walls (15, 16), and to be smaller in height than the end walls (15, 16) and the packets (2) of cigarettes between the end walls (15, 16).

12. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first container (3) is formed from a flat first blank (21) comprising two longitudinal crease lines (22); and a number of transverse crease lines (23) defining, between the two longitudinal crease lines (22), a first panel (14') defining a lateral wall (14), a second panel (13') defining the bottom wall (13), and a third panel (14'') defining the other lateral wall (14); the first panel (14') having two first tabs (15', 16'), which are located on opposite sides of the first panel (14'), are separated from the first panel (14') by the two longitudinal crease lines (22), and define the end walls (15, 16).

13. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 12, wherein the second panel (13') of the first blank (21) has two second tabs (24), which are located on opposite sides of the second panel (13'), are separated from the second panel (13') by the two longitudinal crease lines (22), and define respective inner portions of the end walls (15, 16); the third panel (14'') of the first blank (21) has two third tabs (25), which are located on opposite sides of the third panel (14''), are separated from the third panel (14'') by the two longitudinal crease lines (22), and define respective inner portions of the end walls (15, 16); the second and third tabs (24, 25) being so shaped as not to overlap when folded

onto the first tabs (15', 16').

14. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 4, wherein the second container (5) is formed from a flat second blank (26) comprising a number of transverse crease lines (27), which define a first panel (8') defining the top wall (8), a second panel (7') defining a lateral wall (7), a third panel (9') defining the bottom wall (9), and a fourth panel (7'') defining the other lateral wall (7); the second panel (7') having a first tab (10'), which is separated from the first panel (7') by a longitudinal crease line (28) and defines the end wall (10).

15. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 14, wherein the first, third and fourth panel (8', 9', 7'') of the second blank (26) have three respective second tabs (29, 30, 31), which are separated from the corresponding panels (8', 9', 7'') by the longitudinal crease line (28), define respective inner portions of the end wall (10), and are so shaped as not to overlap when folded onto the first tab (10').

16. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, and further comprising supporting means for holding each packet (2) of cigarettes firmly in place inside the first container (3).

17. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 16, wherein the supporting means comprise at least one partition inserted inside the first container (3).

18. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 17, wherein the supporting means comprise a number of partitions inserted inside the first container (3) and defining a number of pockets, each for housing a respective packet (2) of cigarettes.

19. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, and further comprising a first overwrapping of transparent plastic material enclosing the first container (3) together with the group (4) of packets (2) of cigarettes.

20. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, and further comprising a second overwrapping enclosing the second container (5).

21. (original) A carton as claimed in claim 20, wherein the second overwrapping is made of transparent plastic material.

22. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein each packet (2) of cigarettes is in the form of a parallelepiped having two end walls and a lateral surface, which is bounded by the end walls and defined by two major, respectively front and rear, lateral walls, and by two minor lateral walls; the group (4) of packets (2) of cigarettes comprising one row of packets (2) of cigarettes, in which the major lateral walls of the packets (2) of cigarettes are arranged contacting one another.

23. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein each packet (2) of cigarettes is in the form of a parallelepiped having two end walls and a lateral surface, which is bounded by the end walls and defined by two major, respectively front and rear, lateral walls, and by two minor lateral walls; the group (4) of packets (2) of cigarettes comprising two side by side rows of packets (2) of cigarettes, in each of which the minor lateral walls of the packets (2) of cigarettes are arranged contacting one another.

24. (currently amended) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one of the longitudinal edges and/or the transverse edges of the first container (3) and/or of the second container (5) are beveled or rounded.

25. (previously presented) A carton as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one of the walls (7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15) defining said first and said second container (3, 5) has at least one arc-shaped portion close to one of its edges.

26. (cancelled)

27. (cancelled)

28. (cancelled)

29. (cancelled)